VOL.1, ISSUE 3 | JUNE 2007 | RS 200
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EXCLUSIVE
DELHI LAND HEIST

pay commission debate p6
motivating railwaymen p8
pm's report card p10
insult to manekshaw p18

gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

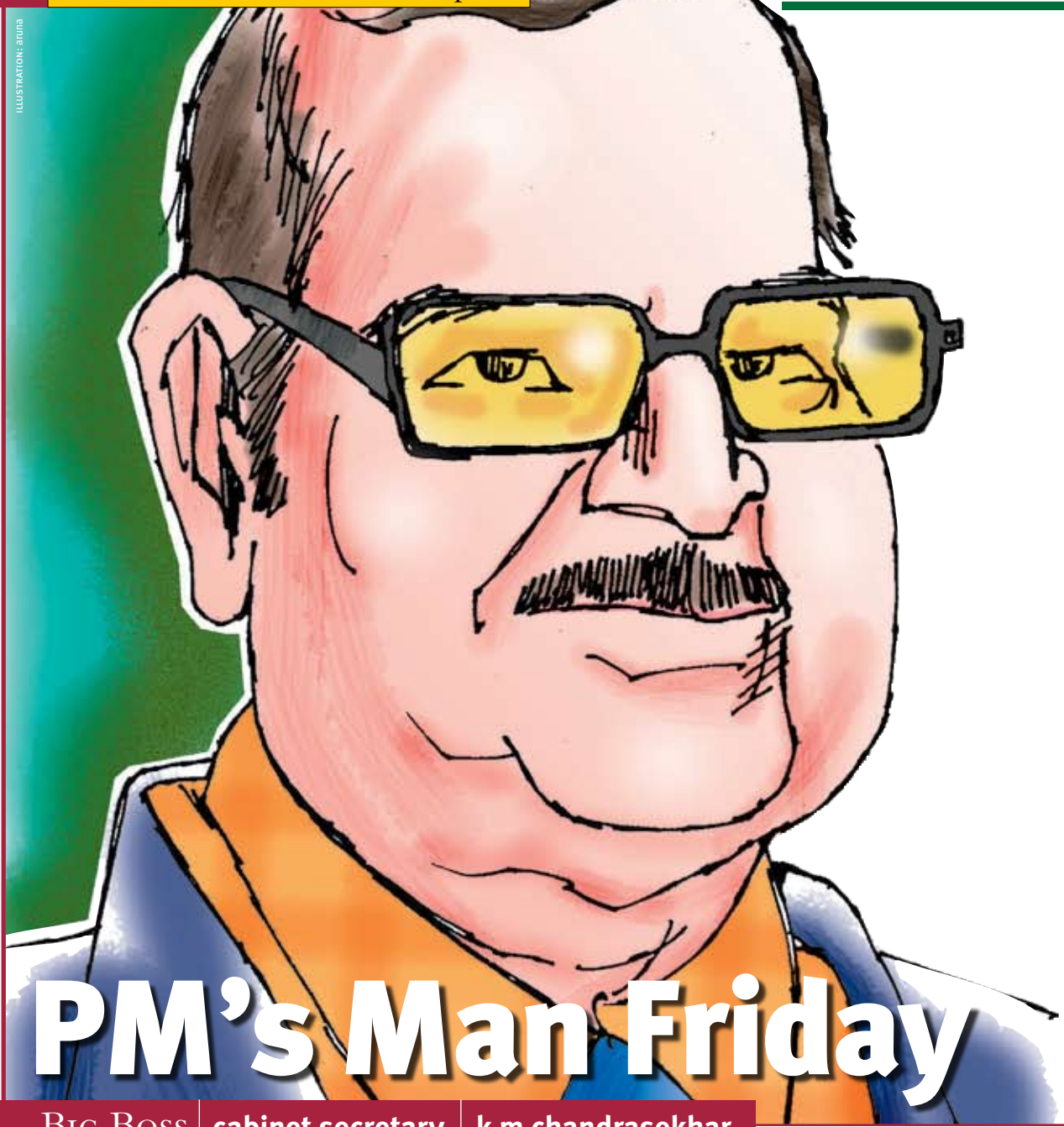

ILLUSTRATION: aruna

PM's Man Friday

BIG BOSS | cabinet secretary | k m chandrasekhar

Is KM Chandrasekhar a creature of the Malayali lobby or a man of his own making? by ANIL TYAGI

So, finally the country has a new head of the civil services – KM Chandrasekhar (1970, IAS, Kerala). Logically, the appointment of a new Cabinet Secretary should be a matter of course, based on measured yardsticks of seniority, experience, capabilities. The ground reality, however, is that this critical bureaucratic appointment inevitably poses a dilemma for the government in power. Political pulls and pushes, regional compulsions, intra-bureaucratic lobbying – especially in this era of coalition politics – are so intense that governments take the path of least resistance by giving the incumbent an extension. →

contents

Bric-a-Brac
peek at goings-on in punjab, uttarakhand, the jd(u), coal ministry
4

Mandarin Matters
civil service hype, foreign service empresses
6

Talk Time
no-holds-barred interview of former ias officers' association chief reva nayyar
8

Stock Doctor
keep your sights fixed on long-term gains
9

Mastermind
charting the rise and influence of sharad pawar
10

Global Scan
the chinese dragon is spewing engineers
12

Milestones
mini revolutions in nagaland & karnataka
13

Out of the Box
where's the tiger in you, roars the army chief
14

News You Can Use
facts & figures, names & numbers, and websites
15

Digging It Out
how top brass caused sail rs 1000-cr loss; the in-house comedy at DD
16

First Stirrings
rajeshwar prasad, '48 topper, remembers a newly-born india
20

And Next Issue...

agricultural prices commission chairman t haque on price policy

former foreign secretary shyam saran on changing the ifs

The Manmohan Singh government followed this time-tested easy-way-out by giving BK Chaturvedi (Chandrasekhar's batchmate) an extended two-year term. All this bought was a reprieve, though not bereft of an acrimonious uproar. Within the civil service voices spoke out against the "Extension Raj" – that effectively denies deserving officers a move up the competitive career ladder. Former president of the All-India IAS Officers' Association Reva Nayyar was using an euphemism when she told gfiles: "To appoint a Cabinet Secretary is the prerogative of the government, it is the government's priority what kind of officers it wants."

Re-extending Chaturvedi's term for another two years – that would coincide with the next general election – was a tempting option for the Prime Minister and his South Block mandarins. Many insiders were betting this would happen. But the PMO sensed the ugly mood within the bureaucracy – a big NO to any extension. A hostile bureaucracy, as any Prime Minister knows, can play havoc with implementation of programmes and that can be a big disadvantage for a ruling party when it goes to the hustings.

Genesis of the Post

Government in India originally dealt with its business by having all matter attended to by the Governor-General-in Council. The Council worked as a joint consultative board. But, as the work load increased, the members of the Council were allocated the business of various departments. This was the beginning of the portfolio system. However, important matters were looked into by the Governor-General or the collective Council. The Councils Act of 1861 put a legal stamp on this system of work-sharing. The Executive Council of the Governor-General was introduced at this time, under Lord Canning.

The Executive Council had a Secretariat. Its chief was the Viceroy's Private Secretary. However, he did not attend the sittings of the Executive Council. This changed when Lord Willingdon, when he was Viceroy, asked his Private Secretary to be present at meetings. In November 1935, the Viceroy's Private Secretary officially became Secretary to the Executive Council also.

A new designation was bestowed on the Secretariat of the Executive Council after the formation of the interim government in September 1946. It now became known as the Cabinet Secretariat and its chief the Cabinet Secretary. However, after Independence, the work of the body altered – from merely circulating documents among ministries to coordinating between them.

The big question was: After Chaturvedi, who? No doubt Chaturvedi was hard-working and intelligent, and had shown considerable administrative prowess and initiative in his former avatar as Petroleum Secretary under Mani Shankar Aiyar. The government was looking for an officer with similar capabilities and the appointment compass swung in the direction of two candidates – Prodipto Ghosh and K M Chandrasekhar. Ghosh was a 1969-batch IAS officer, a year senior to Chandrasekhar. In order to avoid any embarrassment arising from a supersession controversy, the government waited for Ghosh to retire in May before giving formal possession of the post to Chandrasekhar.

The appointment was technically correct because the PMO followed the norms of seniority and capability. But questions are still being raised within the bureaucracy about why Ghosh was not immediately selected. Ghosh's appointment would have given him an automatic two-year extension. And herein lies a tale. Chandrasekhar had a powerful lobby working for him. He is from Kerala and, insiders point out, some of the most influential government officials who form the government's palace guard are also from this state. They include TKA Nair, Principal Secretary to the PM; MK Narayanan, National Security Adviser; PM Nair, Secretary to the President of India; Vincent George, Secretary to Congress President Sonia Gandhi. Earlier this year, until his retirement and the succession of Ashok Chaturvedi (1970, IPS) – one of the country's most sensitive posts – chief of R&AW – was held by PKH Tharakan, also from Kerala.

gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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Whenever India loses a must-win cricket match, fans suspect a fix. When vote predictions go horribly askew as they did in the recent Uttar Pradesh polls, the aam admi says, so what else is new, they too must have been rigged to influence outcomes in the remaining phases of voting. I don't know whether matches and polls are fixed. When we ran predictions during the days I edited India Today, we maintained rigorous secrecy and submitted psephologists Prannoy Roy, Titu Ahluwalia and Dorab Sopariwala to the most rigorous cross examinations. But in today's atmosphere I am compelled to question the sanctity of poll predictions on, say, a TV channel that is earning crores of rupees in campaign advertising from a political party that features in this exercise. Are not, then, polls similar to paid advertorials?

After being unable to anticipate one of the greatest upsets in India's electoral history, it is pathetic to watch these failed media outlets using the same psephological data to make intricate analyses of the results. Only, the public isn't buying. For several reasons.

Media polling has become a handmaiden of the Mandal Syndrome, a part of the Statistical Establishment of media instapundits and politicians that uses the reduction of individuals to statistics and sociological cohorts as an instrument of political and psychological control; the pigeon-holing of people into false and empirically incorrect identities to be converted into vested interests and exploited for patronage.

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LETTERS

With reference to your application for information under RTI Act, 2005 relating to findings of the Pande Committee constituted to look into various aspects of functioning of SAIL, in view of the provisions of Section 8(1)(h), the competent authority has decided not to provide the details at this stage. The Section states: "Information which would impede the process of investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders." Details of the appellate authority of the Ministry of Steel are: Shri Elias G, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Steel, Room No. 289, Second Floor, Udyog Bhavan, New Delhi-110 011. Tel: 23063170. Fax: 23061250. Email: elias.g@ub.nic.in
Vijayalakshmi N, DEPUTY SECRETARY TO THE GOVT OF INDIA & PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Errata - The May 2007 issue misspelt the Committee Chaiman's name as Pandey.

Your magazine is a good endeavour.
Suman Dubey, WRITER & JOURNALIST

It is a brilliantly produced magazine. Well done!
M L Kotru, JOURNALIST

gfiles is the need of the hour. There are so many magazines but none report on the government and its human resource.
Satya Pal Malik, FORMER CABINET MINISTER

I appreciate the innovative idea and fabulous implementation of the same.
Pankaj Sharma, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NEWSVIEWS INDIA

Lobbies may succeed in installing an officer but they cannot rewrite his past record or increase his innate competence. In both these areas, Chandrasekhar stands on his own merit. The way to the Cabinet Secretary's post was paved when he was appointed Revenue Secretary. Low revenue collection was worrying Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram. Chandrasekhar tightened the nuts and bolts of revenue collection agencies. Total revenue receipt in Budget 2006 was only Rs 348,474 crore; in 2007 it reached Rs 486,422 crore – an increase of Rs 137,948 crore. Chandrasekhar's potential was realized and, in the minds of top bosses, he was already designated Chaturvedi's successor. According to a colleague, he learnt how to manage finances as Finance Secretary to the Kerala government.

A Kshatriya from Trichur in Kerala, Chandrasekhar appears a quiet man outwardly but is a resilient adversary of circumstance. He learnt the art of administration from his father, Madhav Menon, who was Chairman of the Railway Recruitment Board. Though born in Kerala, Chandrasekhar was brought up in Delhi. He graduated with a first division from St Stephen's College, and then secured an MA in history from University of Delhi followed by a degree in business administration. Thereafter, recalls his uncle, retired bureaucrat IKK Menon, the quiet, studious youth was persuaded by his father to appear for the IAS examination.

In time, he married Jaya – an arranged marriage – and had two daughters, Priya and Pinki. Priya, a journalist, died in an accident while on assignment in Kashmir.

BATCH OF 1970

A RAGOTHAM RAO, AP, Chief Commissioner, Land Administration, Hyderabad
J HARINARAYAN, AP, Chief Secy, Andhra Pradesh
KALYAN KUMAR CHAKRAVARTY, CG, Member Secy, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts
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ASHA SHARMA, HY, Financial Commissioner / Parliamentary Secy, Agriculture, Haryana
PREM PRASHANT, HY, Chief Secy, General Admin, Haryana
BRAJ KISHORE SINGH, JH, Secy-cum-Food Commissioner
SUNILA BASANT, JH, Secy, Drinking Water Supply, M/o RD
A K MISHRA, JH, Member, Board of Revenue, Ranchi
AJIT KUMAR, JK, Financial Commissioner, Coordination
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AKD JADHAV, MH, Secy, M/o Mines
AP SINHA, MH, Addl Chief Secy, Home, Mumbai
RANI JADHAV, MH, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust
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SHAMBHU NATH, UP, Chairman, UPSRTC, Lucknow
MEENAKSHI DATTA GHOSH, UT, Secy, M/o Panchayati Raj

Chandrasekhar's uncle says he is very religious – like his mother, Thankama – and the household has a separate room for worship – called puma. Chandrasekhar enjoys a daily walk.

The low-profile and publicity-shy bureaucrat has travelled a long way from the start of his career in 1977 as a collector in Idukki. He has been Chairman of KELTRON, a Kerala state electronic company. He was also Secretary, Fisheries, Matsya Federation – an important post in Kerala. He eliminated the middlemen to secure better prices for fishermen. As Chairman, Civil Supplies Corporation, under the leadership of communist leader Chandrasekhar Nair, he established Maveli or Super Bazaar Stores and developed a Public Distribution System of Essential Commodities on competitive prices. He also set up a 95-acre techno park in Kerala.

As Commerce Secretary and ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva, he displayed negotiating skills at the Cancun Convention.

The way to the Cabinet Secretary's post was paved when Chandrasekhar was appointed Revenue Secretary. Revenue receipt in Budget 2006 was only Rs 347,462 crore; in 2006-07 it reached Rs 423,331 crore – an increase of Rs 75,869 crore

LK Joshi, now Secretary, Department of Transport and Highways, is a batchmate of Chandrasekhar and speaks warmly of how the new Cabinet Secretary is a wonderful human being and a good administrator.

Chandrasekhar, who has begun his new charge by warning the Secretaries of Ministries and Chairmen of PSUs to pull up their socks, probably has his career's greatest challenges waiting in the wings. India is going to hold a general election in 2009 and the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) has many expectations of him. His own fraternity is also looking to him for administrative reform. On his shoulders lies the onus of implementing the Sixth Pay Commission recommendations as well as those of the Baijnath Committee on new syllabi for the IAS examination. g

Dev's industrious Man Friday

minister-OSD nexus

PHOTO: sharad saxena

REVA NAYYAR: MINCING NO WORDS

Central Public Works Department (CPWD) employees are duty-bound to look after MPs' flats in Delhi. And, some of them – being ambitious as well as farsighted – cleverly win the trust of the concerned MP's better half, and then quit the monotonous government job to become the MP's official assistant. Thereafter, they prosper visibly – as did Inder Singh, a small-time CPWD staffer, who became Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Santosh Mohan Dev, Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises. The man who once drove a dilapidated two-wheeler now owns a big car.

When Dev was an MP during the Atal Behari Vajpayee regime, Inder Singh looked after the maintenance of his official residence. Dev's wife was so pleased with his services that she ensured he became her husband's personal assistant. Inder Singh resigned and took up this new job. And, when the Congress-led UPA government made Dev a Cabinet minister, Inder Singh became his OSD – working from the minister's residence. Bureaucrats in Udyog Bhawan now receive instructions from the minister's favourite OSD – who is careful to inform the minister beforehand.

Inder Singh's office at the minister's residence is perpetually filled with businessmen seeking to buy sick industries. The ministry has a provision for sale of sick industry to private parties which translates into a lucrative proposition for the ministry, the buyer and the inevitable middlemen. Predictably, inducements are also given to declare an industry sick for the purpose of such a sale.

According to sources, the minister has devised a curious method to show endorsement of his OSD's instructions to officials or to prospective buyers of sick industries. He takes a catnap. Thus, as soon as his head drops onto his chest, everyone takes the hint.

Patel flying high

profligate peregrinations

Minister for Civil Aviation Praful Patel's business empire caters to the needs of both haves and have-nots – his gold mines in Maharashtra are aimed at the former and his bidi factories at the latter. Being in civil aviation has helped him diversify. Liquor baron Vijay Mallya's Kingfisher Airlines has been allowed departure facility from the exclusive Indian terminus and Patel is now expanding his business in Bangalore.

His son's company, Jeetu Developers, has purchased 112 acres of prime land near Bangalore airport at a whopping Rs 1.70 crore per acre. Patel's son is married to the daughter of Bangalore-based Congressman RG Deshpandey, who helped in the purchase.

Sources say a township based on cargo, hotel and related sectors is planned. But how is it that only relatives of Union ministers have the liquidity for such ventures?

Rajnath, perpetual ingrate

trust and treachery

ILLUSTRATIONS: aruna

The BJP's defeat in the recent UP Assembly polls has brought its national president, Rajnath Singh, under attack from his own men. And his betrayal of trust of a fellow partyman is being cited. In October 2000, when he became UP Chief Minister and had to become an MLA within six months, a three-term Congress MLA from Hydergarh constituency, Surendra Nath Awasthi "Puttu", joined the BJP and vacated his seat for the CM. Rajnath promised Puttu a Rajya Sabha nomination but did nothing when the time came.

When the next Rajya Sabha elections came around, he was BJP General Secretary and asked Puttu not to push his claim, pleading that he did not have a base in Delhi and that winning a Rajya Sabha seat would save him from being ousted from BJP politics. Again, Puttu obliged and got a minor, unsolicited, reward – a nomination to the UP Legislative Council.

Then, Puttu's son joined the BSP and secured a ticket from Hydergarh in the recent UP polls. Puttu asked Rajnath to skip electioneering in Hydergarh while he himself, being a BJP MLC, would not campaign for his son. Rajnath agreed but secretly wanted fellow caste politician Arvind Singh of the SP to win. On April 19, Rajnath addressed a rally for the BJP candidate in Hydergarh. Angry and desperate, Puttu then shared the dais with Mayawati when she came to canvass for his son. The SP candidate won and Puttu is awaiting a showcause notice from the BJP. g

Fie thee, Mammon!

higher pay and perks are no remedy for the steady calcification of career paths and erosion of learning opportunities that demand innovative civil service reform | *by* M G DEVASAHAYAM

The elite Civil Services now seem focused on achieving pay parity with the corporate sector. The IAS and IPS Associations have made high-pitched presentations on this before the Sixth Pay Commission.

The IAS Association has cautioned that "poor pay affects governance and poor governance can bring down economic growth from 9% to 3.5%". Pleading for monetization of perks, market-linked salaries and performance-linked incentives, the Association has sought freedom of "lateral movement" for officers to government, private and non-profit organizations "as per the terms of the borrowing organization".

They have lost sight of the basic ethos of the IAS and its nature as a "risk-free permanent civil service". The corporate sector is a "risk-prone temporary hire and fire service" with high pay. If the IAS seeks market-linked salaries, it must accept "market-linked" risks.

The Constitution's founding fathers apprehended an era of "convulsive politics" and "self-seeking politicians" after Independence. So a role was envisaged for the IAS to "give a fair and just administration to the country and manage it on an even keel". The IAS was designed and built around a 35-year career with entry after college and exit at retirement. It is a place for employees who care more about long-term security. That was the USP of the Civil Services till the 1970s.

Today, when young, educated and bright Indians are asked to picture themselves in public service careers, they see dull and dead-end jobs ruled by security and seniority, not performance.

Today, when young, educated and bright Indians are asked to picture themselves in public service careers, they see dull and dead-end jobs ruled by security and seniority, not performance.

The huge pay increases given by the Fifth Pay Commission did not boost the Civil Services' performance.

Governments at all levels have neglected the career development process for decades, allowing departments and agencies to ignore the steady calcification of career paths and erosion of learning opportunities. Remedies could include a flatter, leaner, more agile government; well defined career paths; and stable tenures coupled with dynamic rotational assignments and performance-related promotions.

(The writer, a former IAS officer, is managing trustee of SUSTAIN, a Chennai NGO for urban issues)

PHOTO: sharad saxena

REVA NAYYAR: MINCING NO WORDS

PHOTO: sharad saxena

REVA NAYYAR: MINCING NO WORDS

Deliciously inept!

A recent study on corruption in Asia did not find the rate of corruption in India as high as in some of our Asian neighbours but found that the corruption in India was the most inefficient! | *by* Murad Ali Baig

India's government is teeming with honest officials who break their backs to do a good day's work. Yet, the perception persists that the government is 100 per cent corrupt.

Dealing with the Indian government cannot be done at one point. The system sees a file moving from a receiving clerk to a dealing assistant, section officer, undersecretary, joint secretary and sometimes to a minister before orders are passed back down the chain.

The process is very demanding of time and effort and even the most enterprising politician or senior officer has difficulty in getting files to move faster. Unremoveable babus have nothing to fear on account of delay for they know that if they do nothing, they do nothing wrong.

In the circumstances, no honest Indian or foreign company can do any business involving the government in India without agents or liaison officers who follow the progress of their files. As most reputed companies are unwilling or legally barred from this onerous task, they have to rely on agents to achieve these valuable services out of their fees or commissions. The ultimate proof of the absurdity of the system is evident from the fact that every state government has a large retinue of liaison staff in the capital to steer its own papers through the corridors of power.

Every state government has a large retinue of liaison staff in the capital to steer its own papers through the corridors of power

Corruption will continue until India can push through drastic administrative reforms. This means reducing the many layers of government, retiring about 75 per cent of their subordinate staff, slashing rules and laws, and making government officials accountable for delay and failure to achieve targets.

No party has the courage to take such steps as these would undermine the entire system of political patronage.

If any government can achieve such reforms it would release the nation's huge reservoirs of creativity and enterprise. As this is unlikely to happen, India will steadily fall behind while the rest of the world races to prosperity and progress. g

NOTHING MORALLY WRONG

Corruption is endemic throughout all civic, court or rural services. The official rates for land measurement, registration, mutation, water and electricity connections are so out of date that petty officials augment these and their poor salaries by charging institutionalized higher rates. These are willingly paid by upright citizens and received without qualms. The more greedy and venal thus expect gratifications as a perk of government service.

There are dishonest companies who offer big bribes. These are clear deals where an official or politician is offered large sums in exchange for lucrative contracts or concessions.

A recent study on corruption in Asia did not find the rate of corruption in India as high as in some of our Asian neighbours but found the corruption in India the most inefficient. Elsewhere, if a politician or officer accepted a bribe he would usually get the work done through much simpler bureaucratic systems and if he was unable to deliver would usually refund the money. In China, individuals and companies do not have to account for 15 per cent of their expenditure and in Indonesia and Thailand, bribe-takers often give official receipts. This is viewed as simple speed money untainted by any moral judgement.

The reason corruption thrives in India is because of the complexity of government itself with its huge edifice of rules and laws.

‘Empower field personnel to make on-the-spot decisions’

PHOTO: shanad saxena

REVA NAYYAR: MINCING NO WORDS

JP Batra served in the Indian Army before joining the Indian Railways, where he has had a 35-year career and held key general management positions. Currently Chairman of the Indian Railways Board, he has extensive experience in training, human resources, freight transportation, tourism and catering policy planning. He also acts as Principal Secretary to the Government of India and serves on various state coordination committees.

gfiles: *What is your asset?*

JP Batra: The sheer size of Indian Railways is my asset. Its 14 lakh employees are my asset. They are my partners in achieving good results. If we are given the right environment to work we can produce better results.

gfiles: *So you don't have the right environment?*

JPB: The environment is there, the atmosphere is there. But there is scope for improvement.

gfiles: *You feel a need for correction?*

JPB: We are on the job. Better training is required. It is a gradual process. The work environment has to be improved. Safety maintenance has to be improved. In Indian Railways, safety is still dependent on human input. It has to be mechanized. We are paying attention to these things.

gfiles: *What about liabilities?*

JPB: (Long pause) Difficult question. Old, overaged assets are in the process of being replaced at a fast pace. I don't consider that there is any liability in the Railways, it is a challenge. It is an evolving organization. But we have to change the mindset, the attitude. That is not easy.

gfiles: *What do you mean by attitude?*

JPB: Well, attitudes towards service, customer, work.

gfiles: *It has been proved that 83 per cent of rail accidents are due to human error. What are you doing to correct this?*

JPB: In 2001-02, there were 423 accidents. Last year, we had 195. Internationally, accidents are measured per million train km. An average of 1.5 accidents per million train km is the global norm. We have 0.28 accidents per million train km. At present, we have 53 per cent accidents due to human error.

Stations will be as clean or dirty as the people using them allow them to be. People throw garbage and relieve themselves on the tracks.

gfiles: *Your officials say 0 accident rate cannot be achieved, it is unrealistic.*

JPB: It can be achieved. On fast tracks, Japan has 0 accident rate. Efforts are on. Also, it requires technology to minimize accidents.

gfiles: *In our country, 630 crore people travel annually by rail. Obviously, managing this edifice is a gigantic task. You have to tackle accidents, delays, strikes…*

JPB: There are problems. We are getting feedback that we should empower personnel in the field to take on-the-spot decisions. At present, governance is very important. The motivation of rail personnel has to be enhanced. Training is our main area which has to be governed very efficiently. Induction of new technology, of funds has to be handled. The Railways is an evolving organization and an evolving organization has problems.

gfiles: *You have introduced freight corridors. You are investing Rs 29,000 crore in this. What is the revenue model?*

JPB: We envisaged the freight corridor to cope with our fast industrialization. The first phase is from Delhi to Mumbai, the second from Ludhiana to Sonnagar, Bihar - which may be extended to Kolkata later. At present, we are carrying wagonloads of 23 tons per axle. But on freight carriers we plan to carry 30 tons per axle. We have taken care of the revenue model also. According to our estimates, 15-18 per cent revenue will be earned on the investment.

gfiles: *Fourteen companies have been enlisted with the Railways for container movement. Are we going to see private participation in the Railways?*

JPB: It is a new era for industry and Railways. We are starting public-private partnership in the Railways.

gfiles: *There is a public perception that your tracks are old, bridges dilapidated…that you have an ageing infrastructure…*

JPB: It is not ageing today. The government created a Railway Safety Fund with a corpus of Rs 17,000 crore. We should have spent that money by last year but there were problems so we extended the period by a year; 93 per cent of the work is done. After the current financial year, we will have proper infrastructure.

gfiles: *You are accused of overloading, leading to cracking of tracks and violating safety norms. You are allegedly doing this under pressure from Railways Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav.*

JPB: First, there is no pressure from the Minister with regard to extraloading (overloading). It is a purely technical decision. We did pilot studies and we got clearance from the Commissioner of Railway Safety. We have not done it for the first time, we were doing it in a small way earlier. Our tracks are of world standard and we are taking full advantage of that.

gfiles: *What about these charges: the Railways is the biggest pollutant, your stations are dirty…*

JPB: This is incorrect. As per world studies, 60-70 per cent of pollution is caused by roadways and airways. We will introduce biodegradable toilets by December 2007.

gfiles: *But why is the customer not happy with railway stations?*

JPB: This is a challenge we are facing. Stations will be as clean or dirty as the people using them allow them to be. People throw garbage and relieve themselves on the tracks. BLURB We have set up gangs to look after cleanliness and prevent people from misusing the stations. I can say most of our stations are clean.

gfiles: *With reference to the Sixth Pay Commission, your employees are looking to you. What will you give them?*

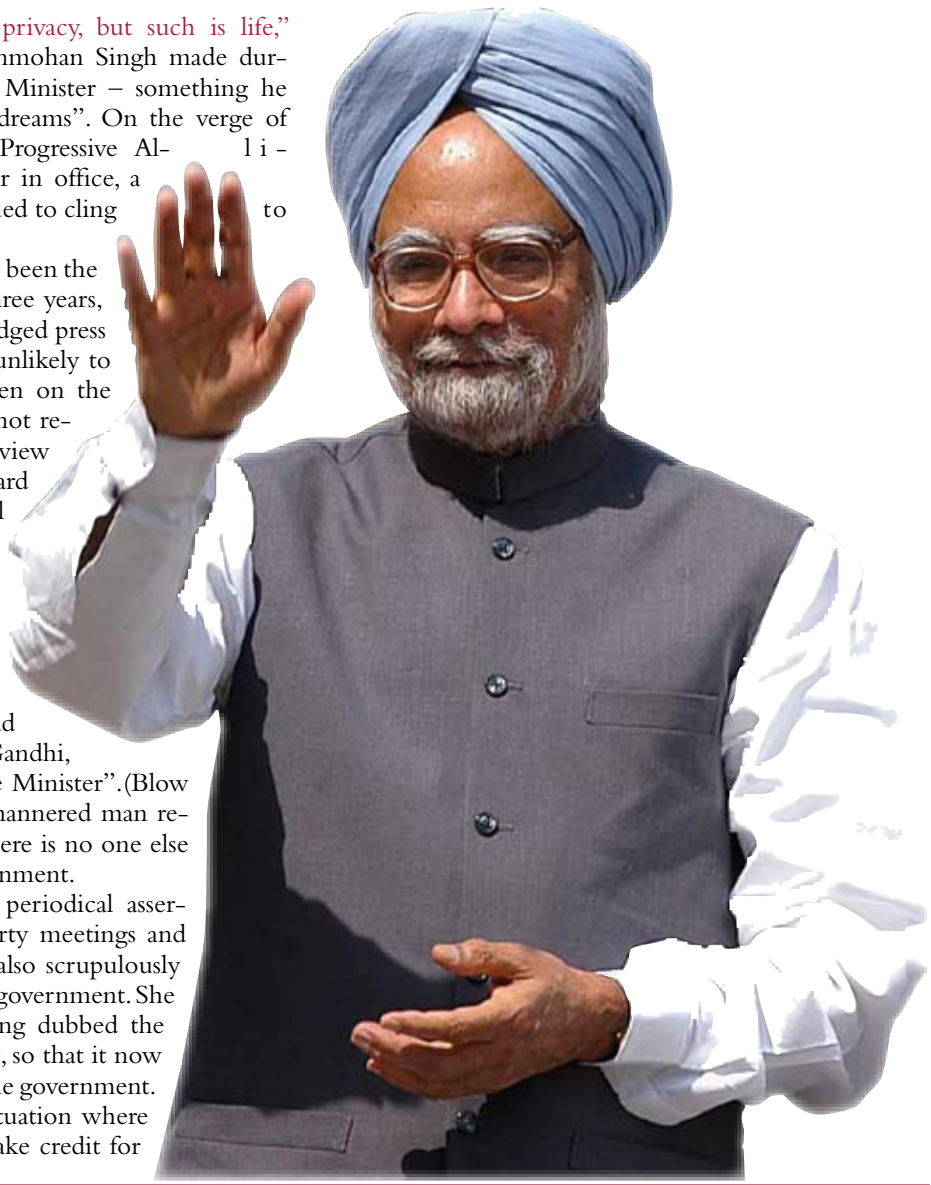
JPB: We have to strike a balance between salary and expenses. We are processing a case to present before the Commission by June-end. My employees will not be disappointed.

g

a horn untooted

THERE IS AN INCREASING PERCEPTION THAT THIS IS A GOVERNMENT IN ABSENTIA, UNABLE EVEN TO PROJECT ITS MOST TANGIBLE ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH ARE THERE APLENTY

by Girish Nikam



'I have lost my freedom and privacy, but such is life," was one of the remarks Manmohan Singh made during his first week as Prime Minister – something he "had not imagined in my wildest dreams". On the verge of completing his and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's third year in office, a glaring feature is how he has continued to cling to that "freedom and privacy".

Though not really invisible, he has been the least-heard Prime Minister. In his three years, he has addressed hardly three full-fledged press conferences. And we are told he is unlikely to add to that number in a hurry, even on the completion of three years. One cannot remember when he gave the last interview to the media. He has hardly been heard even within Parliament, though in all fairness this is not of his own making. The Opposition has hardly given him the opportunity.

The problem with this Prime Minister is that he continues to believe that he is an interloper in that post. Just to remind you of what he had said – "It was a mandate for Sonia Gandhi, not for me; she made me the Prime Minister". (Blow up-editor) So our amenable, mild mannered man refuses to bask in the limelight, and there is no one else who is talking on behalf of the government.

Sonia Gandhi, except for those periodical assertions in Congress Parliamentary Party meetings and stray press releases or speeches, has also scrupulously avoided being seen as the face of the government. She has become overly wary about being dubbed the "remote control" of the government, so that it now looks as if she has no "control" over the government. (Blow up—editor) It is a curious situation where the Prime Minister is reluctant to take credit for

his government's performance and the real winner of the mandate does not want to be seen hogging the credit of the Prime Minister.

The result is a growing perception that it is a government in absentia, so much so that even some of its good performance is getting buried. There seems to be no coherent publicity machinery to present the government's performance. Ministers talk in different voices, and the Prime Minister is unwilling to bring about coherence. So, the government's mistakes get highlighted – leading to the belief that it is not performing.

Of course, there are several areas where it has fallen short. Agriculture continues to be a problem area. There is also huge dissatisfaction over the investments in agriculture, though several long-term measures are being taken that will take time to show results. Left parties – which have emerged not only as the government's saviours but also its worst critics on economic policy – feel the government has exceeded its mandate in the Common Minimum Programme. However, several of the CMP pledges have been kept.

Yet what we hear most is the Left's criticism of economic policies, attacks by the BJP over minority appeasement, rising prices and inflation, foreign policy problems with the US and Pakistan, suicide deaths by farmers and so on.

Neither the Opposition nor the media can be blamed. For both, good news on the governance front is no news.

It is up to those in governance to project their performance and, admittedly, it is not an easy task. The example of the previous National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government is glaring. It overstated its own performance, launched the India Shining campaign and began believing in the illusion.

But then, when in government, you have to talk about your performance if people are to know about it. After his eventful and performance-filled first year in office, Bill Clinton continued to have a poor rating. Then, during a meeting with some influential people from Arkansas, his home state, he described his government's achievements in the past year. When he finished, one of them said, "There must be a conspiracy to keep this a secret, we don't hear any of this." Recalling it in his autobiography, Clinton remarks, "In politics, if you don't toot your own horn, it usually stays untooted."

It is high time Manmohan Singh sheds his shyness, humility, embarrassment – whatever it is – and starts "tooting his own horn" about his achievements and failures both, and also how he plans to tackle the next two years. He must be not just seen, but heard answering all the hardest questions. For he will have no one to blame but himself if his horn remains untooted.g

The problem with this Prime Minister is that he continues to believe that he is an interloper in that post. Just to remind you of what he had said – "It was a mandate for Sonia Gandhi, not for me; she made me the Prime Minister".

KEEPING PROMISES

What were the main promises in the CMP? Strengthening health and education. On this front, the allocations have doubled and even trebled in some cases in the last three years. On the issues of livelihood, land and food security, landmark programmes relating to National Rural Employment Guarantee, mid-day meals, and land rights for tribals have been implemented. On the question of integration, the government is battling the OBC reservation issue in the Supreme Court while programmes for minorities are on the anvil, following the Sachar report. Women's reservation, however, continues to elude consensus. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, with huge funds allocated to it, can change the face of our cities in coming years.

Major measures have been undertaken on the Panchayati Raj front, and a landmark study done by the concerned ministry has paved the way for a road map for better implementation. On the vital issue of secularism, the communal atmosphere in the country is by and large under control though the attacks on mosques are a worry.

PHOTOS: Sharad Saxena

Hey, Guys! Alphonso... Langra, anyone?

The advent of the desi aam in America is the fruit of bureaucratic cooperation

ILLUSTRATION: atuna

The first shipment of India's king of fruits – the royal mango – was given a finger-lickin'-good welcome by US Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns. Irradiated Indian mangoes arriving through US ports-of-entry pioneers the mango trade with the US.

At a mango fest hosted by the US-India Business Council (USIBC), US Trade Representative Susan Schwab and Johanns received from Indian Ambassador Ronen Sen the first gift baskets of ripe Indian mangoes seen in the US capital in 18 years.

Indian mangoes are the first fruit irradiated at an overseas site and approved for importation into the US. Irradiation became an approved treatment for all pests on fruits and vegetables entering the US in 2002.

"This is a significant milestone that paves the way for the future use of irradiation technology to protect against the introduction of plant pests," said Johanns. "India and the US began talking about shipping mangoes 17 years ago. Irradiating Indian mangoes safeguards American agriculture while providing additional choices for US consumers in today's global marketplace."

Prior to export, the fruit will be treated with specified doses of irradiation at a facility certified by the US' Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Each shipment must also be accompanied by a certificate issued by the national plant protection organization of India with additional declarations certifying that the treatment and inspection of the mangoes was made in accordance with APHIS regulations. Inspectors with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection may further inspect pre-cleared commodities at the port of first arrival.

For Indian mango growers, the US market holds significant promise. India is the world's largest producer of mangoes – at 12 million metric tons harvested annually – but it accounts for less than 1 per cent of the global mango trade. America's taste for mangoes is growing, with US demand 99 per cent dependent on imports – mostly from Mexico and South America – at 250,000 metric tons annually, valued at $156 million. By contrast, in 2005-06, India exported 58,000 metric tons of mangoes to neighbours in Asia and to Europe.

This breakthrough of the mango trade is highly emblematic of a push by both the US and India to deepen two-way trade from $30 billion to $60 billion over the next two years. g

LITERARY TASTES

Fareed Zakaria, editor of Newsweek International, who grew up in Mumbai: "I'm thrilled. It's been one of the things I miss most from India. The Alphonso mango is just delicious, the best in the world. Americans have been deprived of this delicacy for too long!"

David Davidar, author of The House of Blue Mangoes and publisher of Penguin Canada: "The broader implications of the move aside, the decision by the US to start importing Indian mangoes simply means residents of the States will now be able to start enjoying the finest mangoes in the world, not just the insipid varieties from elsewhere that were the only option available to them until now."

Shashi Tharoor, whose The Great Indian Novel features one of the best descriptions of India's love affair with the mango: "After years of penury, where what passed for mangoes in American supermarkets was a travesty of the term, we at last have the real thing! I used to believe that true mango lovers could sue American groceries for false advertising – the tasteless, fibrous, tart and flavour-challenged fruit they sold did not deserve the name of mango. Now we should urge every American we know to try a real Indian mango. They'll never think of mangoes the same way again."

by ARUN LAVANIA

Between the covers: splintered childhoods

PHOTO: sharad saxena

Loveleen Kacker is a versatile officer given to the world of books. The Joint Secretary (Child Welfare) in the Ministry of Women and Child Development holds a doctorate in social anthropology and is a prolific fiction writer. After 16 books of fiction, the latest – Study on Child Abuse: INDIA 2007 – is based on searing fact and is a gargantuan compilation of the results of a unique survey. It is the first study in the world to have been conducted on such a large scale – 13 states with a total survey sample size of 12,447 children, 2,324 young adults and 2,449 stakeholders.

Indian children constitute 19 per cent of the world total and an unknown number of them are subject to physical, sexual and emotional abuse – including neglect of the girl child. Till recently, the extent and magnitude of child abuse in India was yet to be fully comprehended for want of empirical data. Due to this, policymakers failed to address the issue. In 2005, Kacker's ministry took the initiative to undertake a national study on child abuse. She remained involved from the conception of the study to its completion.

After generating data around 135 variables, Kacker, as team leader, faced the challenge of analysing it and writing the report. Her educational background came in handy and she was able to bring out the monumental report in three months. It contains startling revelations about child abuse in India and, describing how she feels after completion of the project, she sighs, "It's sad because a researcher may feel euphoria but as a society we are not fair to children."

The study revealed that two out of every three children were physically abused, a majority being boys. In family situations, about 90 per cent of physically abused children were abused by their parents. Two out of three children were victims of corporal punishment. Half of the children worked seven days a week. Sadly, most children did not report the matter to anyone.

Half the children were victims of sexual abuse, with the incidence of sexual abuse being highest in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar and Delhi. An equal number of boys and girls were sexually abused. Sexual assault was highest in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi. Street children, children at work and in institutions were the greatest victims of sexual abuse. In half the cases, the abusers were known to the children and the victims did not tell anyone.

Emotional abuse afflicted every second child and involved an equal percentage of boys and girls. In 83 per cent of the cases, parents were the abusers. And 48.4 per cent of girls wished they were boys. g

Kacker believes sex education by parents and school, coupled with proper legislative support, can tackle the problem considerably. She is already thinking of her next project – juvenile delinquency.

Milestones is about your good work. Tell us about it by writing to gfilesindia@gmail.com

INSIDE EYE

ILLUSTRATION: aruna

At your service, partner

by Shyam Sharan

Today, there is no such thing as purely business, or purely politics or purely economics. You cannot divorce one from the other, particularly when you are dealing with sensitive geo-political factors

The Ministry of External Affairs deals with the subject of energy from the widest possible angles. We view energy not only as oil and gas and hydropower but also as nuclear. Our points of view include renewable sources of energy, fusion energy, and fuel cell technology. And the objective of diplomacy is to create an environment in which these diverse sources and emerging technologies become available to India.

The current focus of our energy diplomacy is the US. We are also engaging the European Union which played a critical role in dismantling the technology restraint regime. We are today a full partner in the international thermonuclear energy research project that is known as ITEL.

India is also being invited by the US to become part of the nuclear aspect of the Generation 4 Project – to produce more compact nuclear reactors that are more economical and proliferation resistant.

In hydropower, India is collaborating with Myanmar and Bhutan. Because of political difficulties, we have not been able to tap into Nepal's hydropower resources. Here, too, lies a major challenge for Indian diplomacy.

In the natural gas sector where PSUs like GAIL have chalked up some remarkable achievements, the role of the External Affairs Ministry should be that of a service provider. Such companies should look on us as a service agency to help identify opportunities. The ministry has the largest network of officers and embassies all over the world.

In addition, there is no other agency in the government that is as familiar with the ways of doing business in countries as diverse as Venezuela, Latin America, and Korea. Doing business is fine, but unless you know the culture of doing business in a country you will not get very far.

Also, today there is no such thing as purely business, or purely politics or purely economics. You cannot divorce one from the other, particularly when you are dealing with sensitive geo-political factors. Unless you put your business in the proper political context, unless you understand the geo-politics of doing business, you may not get very far. We can be a very useful partner in giving you that sense of geo-politics, in showing you what is politically possible and opening political doors for economic engagement. We've already had good experiences, working with Indian PSUs, particularly GAIL, in places like Sudan, Russia, Central Asia, and Myanmar.

PHOTO: sharad saxena

PRASAD: SUPERANNUATED CONTENTMENT

In the area of the natural gas sector where PSUs like GAIL have chalked up some of the most remarkable achievements in the world, the role of the External Affairs Ministry should be that of a service provider.

In the context of globalization we have to look at markets not just as consumers but also as producers. Wherever we can join as producers, we should. Unless we are ready to become part and parcel of global production networks as well as global consumption networks, our energy security is limited.

For oil and gas, Indian diplomacy has homed in on Russia and the Gulf. The Gulf is next door and contains the largest reservoirs and will be India's major source. In the east, it is Myanmar and Indonesia. Sumatra, Papua in New Guinea are potential sources for natural gas. Sumatra is geographically closer to India but its resources are already committed. Japan and Korea have already tied up some of the available gas from these countries. For India, the cost of tapping sources in the eastern part of Indonesia would be prohibitive because of transportation distances.

When I was ambassador to Indonesia, we discussed a swap deal. Since Sumatra is closer to India, we would participate in developing Sumatra's gas for the Japanese and Koreans. Japan and Korea gain because they already have a longer transport route. And India would gain because we would get gas at cheaper prices from nearer the Indian mainland.

The aim of energy diplomacy is not only to identify opportunities but also to devise unique win-win strategies.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary)

Bitter medicine for farmers

Why there is no alternative to the Minimum Support Price policy

by T Haque

PHOTO: Sharad Saxena

PRASAD: SUPERANNUATED CONTENTMENT

The government fixes minimum support prices for 24 agricultural commodities, based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The main objectives are to provide incentives to farmers to adopt improved technology, develop a production pattern in keeping with national requirements, and rationally utilize land, water and other resources. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) policy has been a key instrument, along with modern technology, in making us self-sufficient in production of food grains.

The minimum support prices (MSPs) do not guarantee remunerative prices to all farmers for all crops, in all areas. Farmers of several regions complain that MSPs do not cover production costs. Production costs vary widely from region to region and farm to farm, while the CACP considers all-India weighted average costs. Unless the government fixes differing MSPs for different regions and farmers, the existing methodology cannot guarantee remunerative prices to all farmers in all regions. But differing MSPs would affect efficiency of agricultural production and market integration, and pose the problem of implementation.

What is important is to ensure effective implementation of MSPs all over the country and announce MSPs well before the sowing season of each crop, so that farmers can allocate land and other resources to various crops.

In the absence of well-coordinated policy support for technological change, effective implementation of the MSP policy and rationalization of import duties, mere increase in MSPs may prove counter-productive. Similarly, diversification in favour of horticultural crops would require an integrated support system, involving technology, pricing, marketing and processing, and export promotion.

As for linking to domestic or global prices, can we allow MSPs to fluctuate like market prices without defeating their purpose?

What is important is to ensure effective implementation of MSPs all over the country and announce MSPs well before the sowing season of each crop, so that farmers can allocate land and other resources to various crops.

Accelerating the pace of diversified agricultural growth for poverty alleviation would require an integrated support system, including infrastructure, technology and appropriate price policy. At present there is no viable alternative to the MSP policy as the existing support system for agriculture is weak.

The rapid increase in our food subsidy bill is due not so much to high MSPs but more to rising costs of incidentals and food distribution. There is scope for reducing the burden of food subsidy through improvement in managerial efficiency of FCI at various levels and by adopting a well-designed decentralized procurement system.

Regarding the criticism that the MSP policy discourages the growth of private trade and distorts the market, the question is whether private trade can behave responsibly in an imperfect market situation. The MSP system should function in a way that allows competitive growth of private trade in agricultural marketing and also protects farmers' and consumers' interests. g

(Abridged from a paper, "Agricultural price policy in the wake of economic liberalization", by the Chairman, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices. The complete text is available on www.indianbuzz.com and www.gfiles.info)

gfiles INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION

Pirated Earth

Delhi government sits on a shocking report showing an illegal mega-crore land grab by religious bodies

PHOTOS: sharad saxena

PRASAD: SUPERANNUATED CONTENTMENT

Prime land in Delhi totalling 19.55 acres and worth over Rs1,860 crore at current market rates is in the illegal possession of various "social organizations" in the national capital. This was unearthed by a survey conducted by the Delhi government last year. The exercise, which took six months, submitted its report on February 15, 2006. We reproduce here the survey's listing of the illegal occupants.

No action has been taken by the authorities since the submission of the report. Letters sent by gfiles to the Lieutenant-Governor, Chief Minister, Development Commissioner, Chief Secretary and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on the matter received no response till the time of going to press.

Some proceedings to evict these illegal occupants are pending in Delhi courts.

The survey found that 103 religious and social organizations and two educational institutions had illegally occupied land. Of them, the Guru Singh Sabha in Nauroji Nagar and the Guru Ravi Das Dharamsthan in Motibagh transferred their land to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). The Jagannath Mandir in Bela Road and the Nirmal Sant Kutia in Guru Tegh Bahadur Nagar, near Shastri Market, also transferred their land to DDA "for care and maintenance". Proceedings for such transfer of land have been initiated by some more organizations but 83 of them continue to occupy land illegally.

The 1200-sq-yard plot occupied by the Arya Samaj Mandir in Subhash Nagar was originally allotted to the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) for a primary school in 1976.

In many cases, the original occupants have in turn lost the land to other illegal occupants. For instance, though on paper the Christian Cemetery in Aliganj is in illegal occupation of 3 bighas, this area is actually occupied by Chande Lal Saini. The Balmiki Mandir Sudhar Samiti in D Block, East Kidwai Nagar one had 367 sq. yards of unauthorized land but this is a closed case as no land is available anymore.

The two educational institutions that illegally occupied land were the Sanjay Bal Vidyalaya in Sector VII, R K Puram and the Digamber Jain Mahila Ashram in Daryaganj. Eviction proceedings against the latter are pending in court. g

MAJOR DEFAULTERS

Asha Ram Ji Trust (Ridge Area)	Rs 2,15,60,00,000
Hanuman Mandir (Sardar Patel Marg)	Rs 1,56,84,40,000
Roman Catholic Church (Humayun Road)	Rs 97,65,00,000
Buddhist India Mahavira (Bela Road)	Rs 48,40,00,000
Gurudwara Gurmat Prachar Sabha (Sector IX, R K Puram)	Rs 30,26,82,000
Sindhi Panchayat Shri Udero Lal Sahib Mandir (Sector VI, RK Puram)	Rs 26,62,00,000
Delhi Pradesh Dhobi Maha Sabha (VP House, Rafi Marg)	Rs 20,50,20,000

sl. no.	name of the religious body	location	unauthorised area (in sq.yards)	current worth of land (in rs)
1.	ARYA SAMAJ TEMPLE 3 – 3(19)	MOTI BAGH, NEW DELHI	17.63	35,26,000
2.	SANT NIRANKARI MANDAL 3(41)	BRIGADIER HOSHIAR SINGH ROAD, NEW DELHI	1195.99	11,95,99,000
3.	ARYA SAMAJ 3.(69)	JANGPURA EXTN.	1642.09	24,63,13,500
4.	BUDDHIST INDIA MAHAVIRA 3(71)	BELA ROAD, DELHI	4840.00	48,40,00,000
5.	ARYA SAMAJ TEMPLE 3(77)	MALVIYA NAGAR, NEW DELHI	1312.00	19,68,00,000
6.	GURU SINGH SABHA 3(99)	KALKAJI, NEW DELHI	1450.00	14,50,00,000
7.	GURU SINGH SABHA 3(31)	NAUROJI NAGAR, NEW DELHI	168.33	3,36,66,000
8.	SHIVE SHAKTI TEMPLE 3(135)	LAXMI BAI NAGAR		
9.	MANE KAMESHWAR MAHADEV TEMPLE 3(142)	SECTOR-VII, R.K.PURAM	578.85	11,57,70,000
10.	SANATAN DHARAM SABHA SHIV TEMPLE 3 (143)	SECTOR–VI, R.K.PURAM	2660.69	53,21,38,000
11.	JWALA MUKHI DURGA MANDIR – 3(144)	SECTOR–VI, R.K.PURAM	87.5 (ADDL.LAND)	1,75,00,000
12.	GURUDWARA KALAGIDHAR 3(146)	SECTOR–VI, R.K.PURAM	355.55 (ADD.LAND)	7,11,10,000
13.	SINDHI PANCHAYAT SHRI UDERO LAL SAHIB MANDIR 3(148)	SECTOR–VI, R.K.PURAM	1331.00	26,62,00,000
14.	SANT NIRANKARI MANDAL 3(158)	THYAG RAJ NAGAR	1210.00	12,10,00,000
15.	SANATAN DHARMA SABHA SHIV MANDIR – 3 (177)	ANDREW GANJ, NEW DELHI	2065.65	41,31,30,000
16.	DELHI YOGA SABHA 3(234)	SECTOR-VI, R.K.PURAM	1751.18	35,02,36,000
17.	GURU SINGH SABHA 3(237)	RAJDOOT MARG, CHANAKYAPURI	576.00	17,28,00,000
18.	GURU RAVI DAS DHARAMSTHAN 3(24)	MOTI BAGH, NEW DELHI	211.22	4,22,44,000
19.	RAM KRISHAN SANATAN DHARAM SABHA – 3(253)	SECTOR-III, R.K.PURAM	2211.88	44,23,76,000
20.	ASHA RAM JI TRUST 3(330)	RIDGE AREA	4312.00	2,15,60,00,000

For the complete list, see www.indianbuzz.com or www.gfiles.info

Remembering SAM BAHADUR

PHOTO: sharad saxena

PRASAD: SUPERANNUATED CONTENTMENT

The country's most highly regarded government information specialist provides a first-hand account of the palace intrigues that scuttled recognition for Manekshaw

After over three decades, on April 17, 2007, the government announced that Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw and Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh would be treated on a par with Service Chiefs in terms of pay, accommodation and other facilities. The government also paid arrears due to them. Defence Secretary Shekhar Dutt presented a cheque worth Rs 1.16 crore to Sam Manekshaw in the Military Hospital in Coonoor.

It is not clear what made the Government take the decision after so long. The best thing is that it came without Manekshaw or Arjan Singh asking for it.

I was Public Relations Officer for the Army in the 1960s and early 1970s and was a communicator in the operations against the Chinese in 1962, the India-Pakistan war in 1965, and the Bangladesh war in 1971. I also had the privilege of serving closely with Manekshaw as PRO when he was Chief of Army Staff from 1969 till he relinquished office in 1973.

In the British Army, a Field Marshal never retires from "active service". It is a tribute that the nation pays to the officer. One expected the Government of India to follow British Army traditions.

I was a witness to the pettiness displayed by bureaucrats and some politicians towards Manekshaw in 1972. All of us expected he would be made a Field Marshal. Apparently, the publicity he received was not to the liking of some politicians and many bureaucrats.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wanted to promote him to Field Marshal. She sent a communication in March 1972 through her Principal Secretary, PN Haksar, to the Defence Ministry. The Ministry thought it fit to get the comments of the Navy and the Air Force. The Navy, headed by Admiral SM Nanda, agreed. The Air Force, led by Air Chief Marshal PC Lal, opposed it. Lal did not like the idea of the Army Chief having a rank above the Air Chief's.

Lal said: "The three Services had operated as equal partners in the Bangladesh war, and they had demonstrated

their ability to work effectively together without having a Super Chief sitting over them...I saw in the proposed arrangement a positive danger to frank and free discussions, particularly if the CDS happened to be excessively assertive and intolerant of the ideas of others."

After the announcement that General GG Bewoor would be the next Army Chief, the government finally decided to confer the rank of Field Marshal on Manekshaw, with effect from January 1, 1973.

Manekshaw's office queried whether the government would follow the traditions of the British Army and extend to him the pay and privileges due to a five-star officer. A Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence [later referred to by the Army Chief as "Babu so-and-so"] replied that Manekshaw would be entitled only to the customary pen-

I was a witness to the pettiness displayed by bureaucrats and some politicians towards Manekshaw in 1972. All of us expected that he would be made a Field Marshal in recognition of the role he played in leading the Indian Army to a glorious victory.

sion. My recollection is that the entire package of pension and allowance amounted to Rs 1,600 per month.

I was also told by my seniors in the Defence Ministry that the investiture ceremony would be a quiet affair. I went to the Press Secretary to the President, the late Abdul Hamid, and sought his help to ensure the function secured the publicity it deserved.

On March 26, 1971, Manekshaw was at the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune. He was called to the telephone, and thereafter to Delhi. On board the TU-124, we heard of the Pakistan Army crackdown in the East.

Mrs Gandhi wanted immediate intervention in East Pakistan. Manekshaw said India might have to fight on three fronts, in the west, east and north. His advice was to defer operations till winter when the northern passes would close due to snow. In addition, there would be rains in a couple of months - making eastern India difficult for any military movements.

Army Headquarters prepared for the ensuing operations. Manekshaw frequently toured different formations. Everywhere, he told the soldiers: "The country has looked after us well. We have been fed well, paid well, and our families have been well looked after. Why? To defend the country, fight a war and defeat the enemy. You now have an opportunity. We have to be true to our salt. We will not let down our country." He would get a thunderous response.

The war broke out on December 3, when the Pakistan Air Force bombed airfields from Pathankot to Jalandhar and Agra. In the days that followed, the armed forces of India worked in a coordinated manner.

PRASAD: SUPERANNUATED CONTENTMENT

General Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw came to Delhi with a string of achievements. A Military Cross winner during the Second World War for gallantry in Burma – he was severely injured and almost given up for dead – he was appointed the Army Chief after he succeeded in reviving the morale of the troops facing the Chinese in NEFA as Corps Commander and later as Chief of the Eastern Command.

A charismatic person, Sam Manekshaw's presence would enliven any gathering. Soon after taking over, he visited troops in the forward areas of Jammu and Kashmir. I was a member of his team when he visited a battalion of the 8th Gorkha Rifles – of which he was the Regimental Chief – near Pahalgam. As was his practice, he inspected the troops at parade, held the jawans by the shoulder or belt and asked their names. When one of the jawans gave his name, Manekshaw snapped back, "What is my name?" The proper name of the Chief was too long for the Gorkha soldier. Manekshaw said, "Hamara naam Sam hai, Sa." The soldier replied: "Haan, Sam Bahadur."

On our return to Delhi that day, I filed a brief press release that effectively said that the Army Chief had a new name – "Sam Bahadur". As expected, it became a boxed item in all the newspapers. Manekshaw was pleased no end, as it identified him with the Gorkha Regiment. From then onwards, he was known as Sam Bahadur.

An important role was also played by the broadcast to the Pakistani Army by Manekshaw. The substance of the message, broadcast in Urdu, was: "You are living in hostile territory among a population that hates you. You are surrounded by the Indian Army. Your ports are sealed by the Indian Navy. Your Air Force in the East has been destroyed. The Mukti Bahini and the people are all prepared to take revenge for the atrocities and cruelties you have committed. Why waste lives? Don't you want to go home and be with your children? Do not lose time, there is no disgrace in laying down arms to a soldier. We will give you the treatment befitting a soldier."

On December 16, 1971, the formal surrender took place in Dhaka (then Dacca) with Lt-Gen. AAK Niazi handing over the documents to Lt-Gen. Jagjit Singh Arora, who accepted the surrender on behalf of the Allied Command, which included the Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh.

One felt vindicated when Field Marshal Manekshaw was extended the privileges of a serving Chief of Army Staff, even though it has come after so long. g

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TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see www.indianbuzz.com or www.gfiles.info

K M Chandrashekhar
The 1970 batch IAS officer, who was Secretary, Revenue, has been appointed the new Cabinet Secretary.

Johny Joseph
The 1972 batch IAS officer has been appointed the new Chief Secretary of Maharashtra.

Jairaj Phatak
The 1978 batch IAS officer has been appointed Commissioner of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation.

Sujata Chaturvedi
The 1989 batch IAS officer of the Bihar cadre is now Director in the Ministry of Urban Development.

Debasish Panda
The 1987 batch IAS officer from the UP cadre has become Joint Secretary, Health in the government.

Syed Shahzad Hussain
The 1976 batch IAS officer from Maharashtra is the new Chairman of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust.

Binod Kispotta
The 1987 batch IAS officer of the Manipur-Tripura cadre has been appointed the new Jute Commissioner.

Shashi Goyal
The 1989 batch IAS officer is now Principal Staff Officer to Shashank Shekhar Singh, Cabinet Secretary of Uttar Pradesh.

Pankaj Joshi
The1989 batch IAS officer from Gujarat is now Director in the Ministry of Housing and Poverty Alleviation.

Christy L Fernandez
The 1973 batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre has become the new Secretary, Tourism in the government.

ManjuPandey
The 1989 batch Indian Postal Service officer has joined the Department of Training and Personnel as Director.

Sanjeev Chopra
The 1990 batch IAS officer belonging to the Orissa cadre has been appointed Deputy Director of LBSNAA.

Gurkirat Kirpal Singh
The 2001 batch IAS officer of Punjab has become Registrar of Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar.

Rajneesh Gupta
The 1990 batch IAS officer of the Union Territory cadre has been appointed Joint Secretary, Shipping.

Sutanu Behuria
The 1976 batch IAS officer of HP cadre has become the new Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce.

Abdul Aziz
The professor has been appointed the new Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh University.

MOVING *On: ias officers retiring in june*

ASSAM & MANIPUR
Ananta Kumar Malakar (1990)
ANDHRA PRADESH
Paul Bhuyan (1973)
BIHAR
Arun Bhushan Prasad (1988)
Surendra Prasad Sinha (1989)
Braj Kishore Singh (1970)
Mahabir Prasad (1986)
HIMACHAL PRADESH
Surjit Singh Parmar (1971)
HARYANA
Jaiwanti Sheokand (1985)
Satish Chander Jain (1986)
JHARKHAND
Shyam Shankar Prasad (1993)
RAJASTHAN
K N Gupta (1988)
Anand Kumar Hemkar (1989)
MADHYA PRADESH
R R Gangarekar (1989)
Hiralal Gothwal (1991)
JAMMU & KASHMIR
K R Padha (1992)
MAHARASHTRA
A P Sinha (1970)
PUNJAB
Kuldip Kumar Bhatnagar (1970)
TAMIL NADU
N Dhanamjeyan (1990)
UTTAR PRADESH
Mahavir Yadav (1989)
Shiv Prasad Pandey (1990)

NEWS *you* can use

TOP 10 COMPANIES FOR ASIAN AMERICANS

** DiversityInc magazine has published its list of the best multinationals for Asians settled abroad. How are companies recruiting, retaining and promoting Asian Americans? How are they using Asian-American employee-resource groups and top talent to reach this fast-growing community?*

KEY POINTS ABOUT TOP 10 COMPANIES FOR ASIAN AMERICANS:
** An average of 11 per cent* of new hires in these companies are Asian American, compared with 9.5 per cent for the Top 50 Companies. Nationally, Asian Americans are 4.5 per cent of the adult US work force.*
** 9 per cent* of their managers are Asian American, compared with 7 per cent for the Top 50. Nationally, Asian Americans are 4.3 per cent of managers.* And an average of 11 per cent of management promotions went to Asian Americans, compared with 9 per cent for the Top 50.
** 12 per cent* of the top 10 per cent highest-paid women in these companies are Asian American, compared with 8 per cent for the Top 50.

2007 DIVERSITYINC TOP 10 COMPANIES FOR ASIAN AMERICANS:
NO. 1: CUMMINS
Cummins reports that 12 per cent of its total management is Asian American. Ten per cent of its female managers are Asian American, compared with 7.8 per cent for the Top 50. Thirteen per cent of promotions in management went to Asian Americans.
NO. 2: ERNST & YOUNG
The accounting giant's work force is 14 per cent Asian American. And 15 per cent of its new hires are Asian American. Thirteen per cent of its managers are Asian American. And 16 per cent of its female managers are Asian American.
NO. 3: NOVARTIS
The pharmaceutical company reports that 11 per cent of its new hires in the US are Asian American. Twelve per cent of its managers are Asian American. And 15 per cent of promotions in management went to Asian Americans.
NO. 4: PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS
Longtime diversity leader PricewaterhouseCoopers reports that 17 per cent of new hires are Asian American. Seventeen per cent of women promoted in management are Asian American.
NO. 5: METLIFE
The insurance company reports that 11 per cent of new hires are Asian American. Ten per cent of promotions in management went to Asian Americans.
NO. 6: THE COCA-COLA CO.
Thirteen per cent of its part-time workers are Asian American, double the Top 50 average of 6.5 per cent. And 28 per cent of its part-time new hires are Asian American, almost three times the 10 per cent average for the Top 50.
NO. 7: MERRILL LYNCH
Thirteen per cent of its new hires are Asian American. Eleven per cent of managers are Asian American. Eleven per cent of the top 10 per cent highest-paid women in the company are Asian American.
NO. 8: BANK OF AMERICA
The No. 1 company in the Top 50 has a work force that is 10 per cent Asian American. Nine per cent of the top 10 per cent highest-paid employees are Asian American.
NO. 9: PROCTER & GAMBLE
Eleven per cent of its female new hires are Asian American, compared with 9 per cent for the Top 50 and 2 per cent nationally.* Eight per cent of promotions in management went to Asian Americans, who are 4.3 per cent of managers nationwide.*
NO. 10: WELLS FARGO
The California-based bank has a work force that is 10 per cent Asian American. Twelve per cent of the top 10 per cent highest-paid employees are Asian American, compared with a Top 50 average of 7 per cent.

**Sources: US Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Stock Doctor | g s sood

The benchmark indices are about to kiss record levels and the markets might get extremely choppy. Retail investors, whose participation has already gone down substantially recently, are likely to feel more uneasy and would like to book profits at every rise. Moreover, investors can earn more than 9 per cent on their money by simply keeping it in fixed deposits in banks. Thus, they have less incentive to take risks in the stock market whose valuations already appear a bit stretched. The impact of a strong rupee and rising interest rates could get reflected in corporate earnings of the next two quarters.

The slowing rate of growth in net sales and profits of the corporate sector is already evident if one compares the January-March quarter with the preceding quarter, October-December 2006-07. More than 1,000 companies declaring their quarterly results for January-March 2006-07 registered a growth in net sales and net profit at 32 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. Compared with the previous quarter's (October-December 2006-07) performance of 38 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively, this indicates a probable slowdown in corporate growth rate.

A recent RBI survey also expects a dip in business expectations for the April-June quarter as fewer firms are expected to show a rise in profit margin, production and working capital. Another survey by FICCI also presents a less encouraging outlook on investments and exports for the six months ending June 2007. The survey lists increase in prices of capital goods and rising cost of credit and other inputs as mainly responsible for this. These very reasons could ultimately adversely affect the retail consumer demand for consumer durables as well.

Mega issues such as DLF (which SEBI cleared despite a number of investors' grievances pending), ICICI Bank, SBI, Omaxe, Power Grid Corporation and Oil India that are slated to hit the market in the near future can also make investors book profits to accommodate them. Moreover, these issues will suck a lot of liquidity from the markets which will ultimately get reflected in the valuations. Unless there is a very strong flow of resources from the FIIs, the markets are likely to remain under pressure for quite some time.

PHOTO: sharad saxena

TELECOM LOOKING TO A STELLAR ROLE IN THE FUTURE

HOTELS LOOM LARGE

The year ahead is likely to belong to the hospitality industry. Hotel stocks are in for a re-rating, riding on high occupancy and revised tariffs which are likely to get reflected in their bottom lines. Also, the replacement cost per hotel room is widely believed to have skyrocketed. Investors are therefore advised to grab any good hotel stock. Some of the promising bets in the sector include East India Hotels, EIH Associates, Asian Hotel, Gujarat Hotel, Taj GVK and Indian Hotels.

BHILWARA SPINNERS

CMP RS 12-13

A textile company of the LNJ Bhilwara Group (HEG, RSWM, BSL Ltd, Maral Overseas), Bhilwara Spinners, though, has nothing to write about so far as the current financial performance is concerned. The company has been in restructuring mode and recently sold half of its 88 acres for Rs 22 crore. The remainder is slated to be developed for residential-cum-commercial use. With an estimated price of Rs 1,000 per square foot prevailing for similarly located properties, the intrinsic value comes to Rs 120 per share. The company has already started the process of shifting its plants to another location. At the current market price of Rs 12-13, there is hardly any downside risk. However, the value unlocking may take some time. Investors can accumulate the stock with a time horizon of one to two years. g

The author has limited exposure to the stocks recommended with a long-term perspective. gfiles does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.

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Paul's wagon hitched to Pranab's star

ILLUSTRATIONS: aruna

Delhi Police Commissioner K K Paul has held the post for three-and-a-half years but this longish tenure may soon come to an end. The exit of V K Duggal as Home Secretary has left Paul without a benefactor in the Union government. Duggal's successor, Madhukar Gupta, is reportedly not favourably inclined towards Paul. It is little wonder that other top policemen are eyeing his chair.

So Paul is now looking to External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee to consider his interests. His wife, Omita Paul, is an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the minister's office. And Paul is hoping that Pranabbabu becomes President of India so that his heart's desire can be fulfilled – which is to be Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission so that he can be active for the next five years. The current Chairman, Gurcharan Jagat, retires on June 30.

While Paul keeps his fingers crossed, junior IPS officers in Delhi are doing the same – hoping that he will soon be gone.

'Cardsharp' HP officials turn on Virbhadra protege

When Himachal Chief Minister Virbjadra Singh made S S Parmar his Chief Secretary in October 2004, the appointment was made 11 days ahead of the retirement date of the outgoing official, Shamsher Singh. The latter was made chairperson of the state electricity board for one year and Parmar was brought in as his replacement. At least six IAS officers senior to him were bypassed. It was apparent to all that Parmar was especially favoured by the CM.

Two-and-a-half years later, facing retirement in June, Parmar is no more in the CM's good books. Low-profile and mild mannered, he has now become persona non grata among the state bureaucracy, who are opposing his moves to secure an extension.

Sources say that Parmar's wife has a passion for card playing. The bureaucratic fraternity would visit her to play cards and deliberately lose to please her. The power brokers followed suit, loudly admiring her skill at gambling. The willing losers more than offset their losses elsewhere, courtesy Mrs Parmar's recommendations. This went on for over two years. But once the officer's retirement became imminent and it was clear that the CM was unwilling to grant him an extension, the number of card game enthusiasts at his door dwindled.

Dasmunsi sorts out ugly DD spat

A nasty episode of high-handedness in the offices of Doordarshan has resulted in the public broadcaster losing one of its senior hands. Prasar Bharati CEO Baljeet Singh Lalli summoned the Director of News, Swagat Ghosh, and directed him to produce a programme on the achievements of the UPA-led government to mark completion of three years in office. The bureaucrat then began to instruct the mediaman on programme technicalities. The latter could not help pointing out that he was the one who knew more about TV programme production. A heated exchange followed.

The next day, Ghosh met I&B Minister PR Dasmunsi and sought a transfer. The Minister asked him to stay on. Ghosh then produced his resignation letter from his pocket and laid it before the Minister. Dasmunsi finally pacified him by switching him with Neelam Kapoor, Registrar of Newspapers for India. Ghosh is now the Registrar while Kapoor takes over as the new Director, News at DD.

Doordarshan staff has long suffered Prasar Bharati CEOs who are largely IAS officers with previous experience in fields such as commerce and finance, a world removed from journalism and broadcasting. In Lalli's case, the situation is aggravated by his poor manner/s when dealing with his staff.

Parliament danda for media

India's parliamentary press corps thankfully does not have the same reputation for misbehaviour as the White House press corps. The Washington journos and lensmen have been known to do things like rolling empty beer bottles down the aisle and hanging out in the cockpit during landing to watch the lights while being ferried on a plane accompanying Air Force One on a foreign trip.

But the flock of around 200 accredited journalists who cover Parliament has put Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, Secretary-General PDT Achary and the rank and file of its bureaucracy in a quandary nonetheless. These journalists have been given facilities like computers and phones, and a plush room has been set apart for their pet puja. But, complain bureaucrats, not a line appears in the print media about the business of the House. Only instances of hulla-gulla make it to the front pages. The evening news bulletins in the electronic media include only sound bytes from an MP or two leaving the House.

Now, K V Prasad, Secretary of the Central Press Accreditation Committee, has written to the accredited journalists. The mediapersons have been asked to furnish copies of their reports on Parliament during its last two sessions, adding that this will be a factor for renewal of accreditation. g

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